A PRAYER.

Teach me, Father, how to go
Softly as the grasses grow;
Hush my soul to meet the shock
Of the wild world as a rock;
But my spirit, propt with power,
Make as simple as a flower.
Let the dry heart fill its cup,
Like a poppy looking up;
Let life lightly wear her crown,
Like a poppy looking down.
When its heart is filled with dew,
And its life begins anew.

Teach me, Father, how to be
Kind and patient as a tree.
Joyfully the crickets croon
Under shady oak at noon;
Beetle on his mission bent,
Tarries in that cooling tent.
Let me, also, cheer a spot,
Hidden field or garden grot—
Place where passing souls can rest
On the way and be their best.

—Edwin Markham.

Miss Salome's "Fresh-Air."

"Two?" the minister's wife said. She held her pencil suspended, waiting.

"Mercy, no! One's all I can manage, and more too," groaned Miss Salome. "I couldn't get my sleep out last night dreading it—but I promised your husband; you can put me down. My life's insured!"

Both women laughed gently over the little pleasantry, but it was Miss Salome's face that straightened to its customary sober lines first. The face of the minister's little wife "took" naturally to laughing curves, and held them persistently after the real occasion for them was over. The people of Sweetwater said it was a wonder the mother of six little children, all of 'em "cases," ever felt inclined to laugh.

"I've got the 'T' all made, Miss Salome. I don't see how I can make 'T' into an 'O'! Besides, one would be so lonesome; aren't you most afraid so? Think of my little Jerry or my Ted or Mistress Mary being off somewhere alone!"

The pencil waited, still, and the minister's wife looked toward Miss Salome with arch questioning. She could see beyond her the broad stretch of prim lawn and the lilac bushes fringing it. It looked like such a beautiful chance for fresh-air children. And the house—the minister's wife sighed softly, remembering the crowded little parsonage.

"Shall I write the 'wo' after the 'T'?—or I could write 'hree,' you know!"

Miss Salome laughed, but not with yielding in it.

"Write 'O-n-e,'" she said, "and after my name you can put in a parenthesis—'And the Lord have mercy on her soul!'"

It was early July, and hot waves of clover-sweet sunshine crept into all the open windows. There was scarcely a breath stirring. In the cities, the tenement-house people gasped for their breath, and the little babies were borne away in tiny pine coffins. The minister's wife was thinking of the babies as she rose to go.

"My list is counting up," she said. "I shall send it tomorrow. I don't care to wait any longer. The accounts in last night's paper were heart-breaking, Miss Salome—the tiny ones are dying so!"

"I don't read the papers in the hot waves" Miss Salome said briefly. "I make fans of them then!" She followed her caller through the cool, dim hall to the front door.

"You've said a girl, of course?" she called after her. "Of course you understand I can't have any boy traipsing round?"

"Yes; I said 'one little girl,'" the minister's wife answered quietly.

The children—Sweetwater's share—would come the last week in July and stay a fortnight, the city missionary wrote. They would be the forlornest waifs of the street, and no one was to expect perfect manners or clothes. Miss Salome stayed awake oftener after the minister's wife read her the letter. There were plenty of times when she railed bitterly at herself for ever promising.

On the long-dreaded day, she walked to the station to meet the train and her fate. The minister's little wife joined her half way. She had a determined look in her sweet, tired face.

"I'm going to bring home the left-overs," she said. "There are most always one or two. Somebody gives up at the last moment, or else the missionaries can't resist the temptation to smuggle in one extra at the end. I shall bring any little left-over home, if I have to make a field-bed for my boys out on the piazza! It breaks my heart to read about the poor little suffering things."

She was not thinking of Miss Salome's big, empty rooms—she was thinking of the terrible, crowded rooms in the sweltering city tenements. Miss Salome would not let herself think of those.

Then the train swept in and the little waifs trailed out on the sunny platform and stood about uncomfortably. The minister's wife sorted them out busily, checking them off as she went down her list—these two to Deacon Spooner, those two to Mrs. Witherspoon—one to the Wetherell's one to the Greenes, one to Miss Salome—but Miss Salome's was a boy! They were nearly all boys. The one or two girls were mere babies, and Miss Salome had specified no babies.

"Dear me," murmured the minister's perplexed little wife, gazing up and down the disreputable little ranks in search of a girl to fit Miss Salome. A touch on her arm made her turn.

"Never mind about me," Miss Salome was saying, with humorous wrinkles round her eyes; "I can get along. I wasn't really hankering."

"But there'll be too many to go round, Miss Salome. I haven't dared to count, but I know there are more than enough. And so few little girls—I do believe Miss Trent made a blunder and sent us the wrong consignment! Poor little things!"

There were three left-overs, even after Deacon Spooner took an extra boy and the Greenes took two.

"I can squeeze two in, but I can't squeeze three—I simply can't!" whispered the minister's wife in despair. She went up to the solitary boy that nobody could squeeze in, and patted his little grimy hands compassionately. He stood shuffling his bare feet stolidly.

"I'll go wid her," he said suddenly, releasing a hand to indicate Miss Salome's retreating figure. And without further warning, he darted down the platform in close pursuit. At the street crossing he caught up.

"I cotched yer," he cried breathless. "I'm goin' 'long o' youse. Der ain't no room now'eres else. Ain't dere room in your tenement? I can bunk on de roof all right."

Miss Salome stood still and ran her keen gray eyes over the lean, patched, unlovely little creature. Something in his cheerful confidence in her making room for him touched her. O, yes—yes, yes—there was room enough. There were five, six rooms. He would not need to sleep "on de roof." But this terrible little unwashed boy—it was not easy to associate him with one of her immaculate beds, as white, every one of them, as he was black.

"Did you ever take a bath?" she asked abruptly.

"Take a wot, ma'am?"

The lean, brown face expressed utter unacquaintance with the word.

"Ah—why, bath. Did you ever wash yourself?"

A minute's wrestle with memory and then a kindling of new-born pride in the brown face.

"Yer bet! I washed me face w'en me pal got t'rowed down an' I went ter de hospjital ter see him. I didn't go wid no dirty face, naw!"

Miss Salome gasped, helpless before such an experience. It was unconsciously the meeting of the two ways, in her mind, and she took the one that would lead them home together.

"I'll keep him long enough to wash him up, once, any way," she thought grimly.

Miss Salome's "case" was an unusual one, if she had but known it. The city missionaries who rounded up the little waifs for their outing in the country made strenuous efforts to send them to their benefactors clean, at least, and as whole as they could make them. But this grimy little mortal who had adopted Miss Salome was an exception. Taken into the ranks at the last minute, there had been no time to make the best of him.

They walked on together, the boy's bare feet paddling unevenly beside Miss Salome. She stole a covert glance by and by at the alert, unchildish face. What could he be thinking of?

"So you had a 'pal'? What is a pal?" she asked.

"Oh!—well, a pal's a pard, yer know. Yer goes into trade wid him an' shares de winnin's, see? Yer sticks by him t'rough t'ick an' t'in; yer don't never go back on yer pal, naw!"

"And your pal is dead?"

The change in the boy's face was wonderful. Miss Salome marvelled at it. Mingled joy and tenderness struggled through the grime for equal expression.

"Mickey, dead? Yer bet he ain't! He's gettin' well—yer can't kill Mickey! He's comin' out er de hospital in a week, Mickey is."

They were close to Miss Salome's great white house, and further conversation was interrupted.

"Come in," Miss Salome said, at the lilac bushes that framed a gateway. And, in silent awe, the city waif paddled in, his soiled little face lifted to the great purple tassels overhead.

"What's them?" he whispered, after a moment.

"Lilacs," Miss Salome answered briefly. It was another argument in the boy's favor. To think he had never seen a lilac bush! (Miss Salome called it "laylock.") She felt her heartstrings freshly tugged.

It does not take a great while to wash even a little gamin's face that is a stranger to the operation. But the cleansing over, still the boy tarried. Miss Salome did not invite him—he stayed. He was perfectly happy in a novel way. He went about the big front yard on tiptoes, at first, as if he were afraid of crushing the grass with his little calloused brown feet. And when inadvertently he trod on a great red clover head, Miss Salome saw him stoop and "set" its broken stalk with splints of herd's grass. He took plenty of time, and his thin unchildish face was puckered gravely.

"I shall let him stay his time out," murmured Miss Salome; and that night—it was the first night—she sat up to mend his clothes. When she carried them back, a little less out at the elbows and forlorn, the boy was fast asleep and the moonlight was caressing his face as it lay in brown relief among the white pillows. It could not have kissed more tenderly the little face of a child who was loved, whose mother bent over him. The light in Miss Salome's unsteady fingers flared and half roused the waif. He opened his eyes and regarded her in stupid terror.

"Lemme 'lone—I ain't doin' nothin'," he muttered, shielding his face as if from a blow, then sinking away into sleep again. Miss Salome uttered a soft sound of pity in her throat. The tug at her heart-strings tightened.

The next day, the boy appeared before Miss Salome, rolling back his sleeves energetically. He beamed up at her with a friendly grin.

"Yer gotter brush an' som' blackin', ma'am? I kin shine yer boots complete—that's me perfeshion. An' I'll give de stove a coat, too. Yer won't mind, ma'am?"

He waited wistfully. It was his only way of acknowledging his devotion to his adopted mistress.

Several days went by uneventfully. Then Miss Salome took the boy to town and fitted him out with new clothes. That day was eventful. The child was transfigured—made over new. Even his little uncouth tongue seemed to partake of the softening influence of the patchless, natty trousers and the little brass-buttoned coat, and the strange street dialect sounded less offensive in Miss Salome's ears. She was proud of her fresh-air boy, and her heart-strings, tugged so often and so persistently, vibrated with gentle steadiness. The lonely woman was near to loving the little lonely child.

Then came the rude awakening when one morning Miss Salome found her bird had flown, tricked out in his proud new plumage. The ragged old clothes were smoothly folded on a chair. There was nothing else save a freshly blackened stove and shining shoes at Miss Salome's door, to tell of his having been there and gone.

Miss Salome stood a long time beside the heap of folded clothes, torn between anger and grief. She had never felt so keenly the one way or the other in all the fifty-seven years that spanned her quiet life. The clothes—if he had only left the new clothes behind instead of the old! That would have helped so much.

"But it wouldn't have been near so human," sighed the poor woman drearily. "Then I should have been entertaining an angel unawares. No, no, let him wear 'em back to his slums, but don't let him ever darken my doors again from this time forth and forever more!"

Still, she left the little ragged clothes unmolested. It takes time for heart-strings to recover themselves.

Two days after the waif's disappearance, Miss Salome saw a strange little figure hobbling up her walk, to the accompanying tap of crutches. She had never seen the boy, but the clothes! She adjusted her glasses hastily and nodded as she looked. They were several sizes too large—the trousers and the sleeves were turned up, and the coat was lapped until but one row of brass buttons was visible—but the clothes were the ones Miss Salome had bought for her fresh-air boy.

The little figure hobbled nearer, and an eerie gaunt little face looked up frankly at Miss Salome.

"It's me—I'm Mickey," the child explained at once. "Jerry sent me—Jerry's me pal, yer know. He said as I could wear de clothes—he t'ought youse wouldn't mind?"

The upward inflection at the end was intense with wistful interrogation. Mickey propped one crutch under his arm and ran his thin white fingers up and down the coat front admiringly.

"Ain't dey dandies? Jerry was a reg'lar toff, but I guess I'm too little to fill 'em out—it takes the stuffin' out o' yer ter bunk at de hospital a mont'."

He drew close to Miss Salome and touched her dress gently.

"Jerry wanted I should ax yer if yer'd be willin' ter swop—he said ter tell yer I were a tip-topper chap 'an him—but he lied. Jerry's a brick! He give me de clothes an' made me come, cos I'm his pal an' goes lame. Dat's Jerry."

The child in the overgrown clothes seemed to shrink to a baby's size as Miss Salome looked at him out of dim eyes. The other child's face—Jerry's—peered over his shoulders at her.

"Yer won't mind, ma'am?" it seemed to say wistfully.

"I say, ain't it prime here?" Mickey said. "Dere's grass you kin step on, an' flowers on de trees, an' de house is painted fit ter split! Dat's w'at Jerry let on here'd be—Jerry said he bet 'twere like w'at de mission chap said goin' to Heaven'd be. If—if yer wouldn't mind, could I bunk on de grass, ma'am?"

Two weeks later, the minister's little wife called on Miss Salome again. She pointed out of the window to a little figure in the grass and smiled.

"Still here?" she said.

"Yes," Miss Salome said briskly, "I'm going to keep Mickey till he's strong again. He's coming on—you'd be surprised to see him eat now! And Jerry——"

Miss Salome's face broke into mellow curves—outriders of a laugh. The minister's wife wondered why she had ever thought it a plain face.

"Jerry went off as brown and fat! You know, I sent for him to come back after he ran away and 'swopped' himself? He's been here two weeks with Mickey, and he's just gone today. He said it was necessary for him to go back and 'settle up his business'!"

The laugh had arrived and Miss Salome gave herself up to it luxuriously.

"Such a boy! Yes, we're going into partnership together, Jerry and I, after that. We're going to be—pals!"—Annie Hamilton Donnell, in Country Gentleman.

The cost of the public schools of greater New York for the year 1901 will be $17,710,078. The number of pupils in the schools is estimated at 408,112. So that the average cost for each pupil is $43.39. In 1890 there were 230,931 pupils, the total cost was $6,000,639, and the average cost per pupil was $25.98. The expense of the public schools has, therefore, nearly tripled in ten years, while the average cost per pupil is nearly $18 a year more. This increase is partly due to the municipal consolidation and partly to the Davis law, which has increased the average salaries.

The Hessian fly probably ranks next to the chinch bug as a farm pest in the United States, and its ravages in other countries have long been known and appreciated. While its first scientific description was by Thomas Say in 1817, it had been for many years recognized as a pest in wheat and had received in this country the popular name of Hessian fly in the belief that it had been introduced by Hessian soldiers during the war of the revolution.

A short absence quickens love; a long absence kills it.—Mirabeau.

Raymond had just been over to the hall with his basket of flowers, mostly, from the woods and fields.

Decoration day always found him on hand; and although his contribution was simple, he was glad to be able to do even a little toward furnishing material for this touching memorial service.

Raymond was the grandson of a veteran of the civil war, and this year he wanted to do something more than usual, to let the old friends of the grandfather whom he had never known understand his loyalty, both to his grandfather's memory and the country that he had died for.

Suddenly he remembered an old tattered flag that stood in a corner in the attic, and beside it a musket, rusty and time-stained. Then he looked at Rover.

"Can you do it, Rover?" Raymond's eyes asked the question. The soft brown eyes of the dog answered, "Try me."

"All right, Rover, I will."

Rover's tail ceased its impatient tattoo upon the floor, and with a yelp of delight he followed his master up the attic stairs. Half an hour later the boy and the dog sat side by side upon the door-step. The boy held a flat piece of wood in one hand, and his jack-knife in the other. Occasionally he lifted a faded flag, and slipped the end of the worn stick through a hole which he was whittling in the new piece of wood.

At last he sprang to his feet, saying, "All ready now, Rover! Do you think you can hold that in your mouth?"

Rovers' eyes said, "Of course I can!" as his tail gave three excited thumps. Good, faithful Rover! Raymond knew that he could be depended upon to be his color-bearer. Now

"WITH BARE HEADS AND SOLEMN LITTLE BROWN FACES."

for his own part in the program.

The sound of approaching footsteps and the beat of a drum floated up to the spot where the boy and the dog were making ready to honor their country's fallen heroes.

From a window of the cottage a pair of tear-dimmed eyes watched the strange preparations.

Raymond hastily donned an old soldier cap, and shouldered the rusty gun. He hoped that he looked like a soldier. Rover's admiring eyes assured him that he did.

"Now, Rover," said Raymond, patting the dog's head, "I'm going to let you hold the flag."

Rover never was happier than when he could carry a bundle; but this was such an unexpected privilege that for a second or two the flagstaff veered like a weather-vane with each delighted thump of his stub of a tail. Then, seeing his master's motionless attitude, Rover took pattern; and as the little company of veterans drew near, the color-bearer and his master attracted instant attention.

Every man in Company C loved Raymond; loved him for his own sake, for he was a bright and lovable boy, and also for the sake of the brave comrade who had marched with them through many a weary campaign, and at last had given his life for his country.

There was a quick order from the front, and instantly every man lifted his hat, and the band struck up the "Star-Spangled Banner;" and Raymond, with his faithful dog beside him, and his grandfather's tattered flag waving in the breeze, was the hero of the day.—Helen M. Richardson.

Thousands of Unknown Dead.

One of the largest national cemeteries in this country is located at Salisbury, N. C. There are 11,000 unknown dead in the cemetery, which is kept in splendid repair by the government.

The society hand-shake isn't exactly what you'd call "a pretty how'd you do?"